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SATURDAY, FEB. 17, 1872.

Subject: Waiting Upon God.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

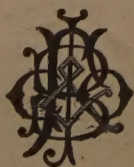
A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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WAITING UPON GOD.

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”—JAS. V. 7, 8.

There were peculiar circumstances in the early history of the Christian churches which rendered such exhortations particularly necessary. Still, in every age, substantially the same necessities exist, though they may take on different forms. And as you go back you will find, in the Old Testament, abundant instances of precisely the same counsels, indicating the same trials and the same wants. *To wait upon God*, is one of the staple exhortations of the Old Testament; and it is continued all the way through the New; and if there were to be another Testament written to-day, that exhortation would still have to occupy a prominent place in it. For the necessity of waiting is one that will run through time, and will be universal, so long as we are in these mortal bodies and under the dominion of the natural laws of this world.

The Scripture is full of intense incitement to activity, to enterprise. We are commanded to *do with our might what our hands find to do*. We are commanded to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*. We are told to *strive to enter in at the straight gate*.

These exhortations indicate that it is no sluggard's life which is expected of men, and that whatever may be the merit and virtue of waiting, it is not a merit derived merely from indolence.

Men are exhorted to quietness just as much as they are to activity. They are exhorted to patience as much as they are to enterprise. They are exhorted to wait, and to wait patiently, and to wait upon God; and it is so often urged and represented that it must have had great significance in the days of old, as we see it has in our time.

The whole attitude of this implied truth in the Scripture justifies a somewhat particular examination of it; and the more because there are perversions which have had sway, and which need to be exposed, that they may be removed.

I remark, then, in the first place, that there is no moral excellence in simply waiting, where waiting springs from idleness, from indifference, from indolence. It is not the simple act of waiting that is beneficial. It is waiting under circumstances which require the exertion of manliness, that brings the blessing. For the true Christian idea of waiting upon God patiently, implies self-restraint, trust in God, and the exertion of superior elements of manhood. It is a great deal easier to act than to stand still, when men are vehemently pressed with necessities. To act first, and then patiently to wait, is higher than either of them separately.

That which is implied is this : That men have vehement desires, strong necessities ; that their emotions are whetted sharp, and are in full activity ; that they do all that in them lies of knowledge and strength without receiving the blessing which they desire ; and that then there is a grace in them by which they can stand quietly and see the blessing not given, or see it delayed.

How far this is from that dullness which desires nothing, and waits as the sluggard waits ; from that waiting upon God which comes from spiritual indifference, where men are just as content to be without the divine influence as to have it ; from all forms of indolence by which men refuse to put forth their natural and appropriate energies !

That which is meant is quietness in regard to slow-coming things for which the whole heart yearns. Waiting upon God is more eminently productive of the things which are noblest and nearest like God. It is patience, after one has striven hard to work out his own salvation, that is here referred to. It is strong confidence in the immutableness of moral laws. It is confidence in God's overruling, overmastering providence.

Patient waiting upon God where it exists, is not only founded in intelligence, and in that faith which is the handmaid of intelligence, but it is a state of submission and sweet relinquishment of one's own urgent and importunate feelings. It is the yielding up of everything into the hands of God with confidence that the Judge of all cannot but do justly ; and that in his own time and way he will fulfill the desires of our hearts, if they be right ; or that if they be wrong, he will meet our wants with things other than those which we seek. There are two blessings in prayer. One is, that God will give us what we ask if we are enlightened, and

ask things that are right ; and the other is that he will not give us what we ask unless we are enlightened and ask right things. God will grant our petitions unless we plead for things which are not necessary, or which are not good for us. He is like parents in this respect, who withhold from their children things which they desire and ask for, but which it is not best for them to have.

Consider now, with these preliminary statements, the text which we have selected.

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.”

There is the measure of the waiting. It is to continue clear through till the Lord appears ; till the enigma is solved ; till the mystery is eclaircised. To those to whom this was addressed, it meant the final coming of the great church which they thought would take place in their own time ; but to us it means the coming of the Lord in the solution of difficulties, and in the fulfillment of any great blessings which we seek.

“Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.”

There could be no more admirable analogue than this of husbandry ; for there is in it the most obvious union of persistent natural laws with human activity, which bears the same relation to natural laws that the rider does to the horse. It is the horse that performs. It is the rider that steers and guides him. Natural laws, of themselves, are brute forces, wandering wide, and doing little. It is not until great natural laws, if I may say so, are inspired by human volition and human intelligence, that they become productive of good—that they know how to converge and coöperate so as to multiply blessings upon the earth. Without natural laws man is utterly helpless. Without men natural laws are largely useless. Man, knowing how to use those great physical, permanent laws, directs them to certain purposes. This combination it is that makes fruitfulness in our fields. Human strength makes natural laws productive. What are cities but the insignia of thought applied to brute and dead material ? Behold how all abroad, from materials of stone, there are reared up these structures which have on them, every one, the signet of a natural law, and every one the signet of human thought. What are gardens, what are vineyards, what are orchards, what are grain-fields, what are railroads, what are canals, what are tunnels, what are bridges, what are highways, but the union of divine natural law and human intelligence ? Without the one and the other they were impossible. There has been a union for the production of all of them. There has been a vitalizing energy derived from men.

There has been patience in finding out, in inventing, in perfecting. Through ages the world had been waiting for the things which *we* inherited at birth. They are common to *us*. The very carpet on which you tread has been for thousands of years learning how to be woven; and its colors how to be extracted, and how to be applied. The very raiment which covers you has a long history. What changes have taken place in the machineries; in the various implements; in the processes of dyeing! These things are results of human thought running through generations and generations. Human society itself is a vast museum and exhibition-hall, as it were, showing what man's nature has been able to do when it has worked upon the divine law.

See what husbandry does every year! We prepare the soil. We do not make it. It is ready at our hand. For generations God's mills have been grinding, the glacier and the rock have come together; the subtle water, made solid by cold, and moving per force, has ground and ground; and behold, the soil that has in it the results of the workings of cycles of centuries. Man finds it ready waiting for him. It is waiting for man as much as man is waiting for it. It is only when by his skill the plow opens the furrow, and he sows intelligently, studying the seasons, the markets, and the pressing necessities of men about him; it is only when, waiting patiently through months if it be fields of grain, or if it be orchards and vineyards through years, that he begins to find remuneration.

Farmers wait, and wait patiently, and wait confidently; and their waiting is from no laggard's indolence. It is from a consciousness that they have done that which, coöperating with natural law, will produce the desired results. God's stamp is upon natural law, and it is warranted to cut, and not to fail. The farmer waits in intelligence; the sluggard waits in laziness. The farmer thrives; the sluggard degenerates. The farmer has abundance; the sluggard suffers cold in winter, and want the year round.

Men who refuse to do anything in God's vineyard oftentimes pretend to honor God's sovereignty by waiting upon God; but who would think that he was honoring nature's sovereignty by waiting on it thus? There be those who say it is presumptuous for man to put forth his hand and touch the work of God. There is nothing more erroneous than to suppose it to be presumption for man to put forth his hand and touch God's work, if he do it reverently and intelligently; but there are those who seek for nothing, and long for nothing as a special desire, and call that *waiting with reverence upon God!* They are afraid of interfering with the

sphere of divine authority and divine sovereignty. It is their own spiritual indolence that leads them to wait; for no one of them that owns a ship sails that ship as he does his soul. No one of them that has a farm manages that farm in husbandry as he does his soul in spiritual things. He must know how to work who is to know how to wait. He must experience fatigue who is to appreciate the blessing of rest. He must have enterprise who is to understand the great charm of patient waiting upon God.

Look, then, at the sphere in which this virtue of waiting is to operate. Bearing in mind the nature of that waiting which brings a blessing, we shall see that there is a sphere for it in our lives full as great as there was in the lives of those of old, though we are differently placed from what they were. We shall see, also, that one of the most common traits of a true piety is that of patient waiting. As in all the emergencies of secular life we are called to wait patiently, so we are in all the emergencies of religious life.

This may seem very little to the prosperous. The profounder moral truths of the word of God seem well-nigh wasted upon those who are walking upon a highway cast up, and who are protected with abundance. The very nature of things favors them. They can scarcely by imagination strip themselves of their happy circumstances, and go down into the places of those for whom the most special parts of the word of God are pronounced. For the Bible takes care a great deal more of the poor, and needy, and humble, and broken heart, than it does of those who are full, and have consciously no necessities. There are thousands and thousands who wage daily battle for their very existence. It is a matter of little thought to you, where your food shall come from. You choose between luxury and luxury; between variety and variety. "What had we yesterday?" is to determine, "What shall we have to-day?" But there are thousands and thousands (some of them within a stone's cast of your very doors) who are obliged literally to pray the Lord's prayer, "Give us *this day* our daily bread." There are those who to-day wander from street to street without shelter. There are those who have none to greet them when the sun goes down; who have no roaring fire, no cozy nook or corner, no wife or children running out to give them welcome. Strangers in a strange land are they; and many of them worse than that. By their own fault they are so, often, let it be said; but sometimes they are so without their own fault. They are broken in health, broken in courage, broken in spirit. The whole world is a storm to them. Everywhere is a desert to their feet. They are in the wilderness, as it were, torn by thorns and by briers. Every day their life is a campaign against physical trouble.

You live happily because your house is ceiled and warmed ; because it is proof against the summer rains and the winter's cold ; because it affords protection the year round ; and because your eyes read lessons of beauty from the walls which God has enabled you abundantly to furnish and replenish. But are there none near to you who weep by day and by night, and are drenched by the rain, and shiver with the cold ? Are there not many who think to-day, as the most urgent thought of their life, "What shall I do to-morrow ?" Are there not many who are let out of prison as Peter was, by some angel of mercy, into the great and barren street, at night, and who wander up and down, and knock, as he did, without obtaining entrance ? Are there not hundreds and thousands who earn wages which they cannot get, which are pitilessly withheld from them, and who are suffering from the severity of winter ? Are there not advantages being taken, on every hand, of weakness and ignorance ? The destruction of the poor is their poverty. They cannot be economical. They cannot make provision for the future. It is not possible for them, in their foresight, to do in the present hour for the hour which is to come. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Sufficient unto the single hour, often, are the acquisitions thereof—and only for the single hour.

Then there are heart matters. It is sore for one's self to be hungry and friendless ; but how much sorer is it to see those whom you love suffering, and to plead, to search, to labor, and to see them suffer still, and to hear only sighs and cries of want—and that too, in the very sight of comforts—in the midst of abundance ! Bitterer than everything else is it to see children suffer ; yea, to see those whom we love as our own life sickening and wasting, and to say in ourselves, "Oh, were I but rich, this child might be spared to me ! but I am poor. I can neither travel afar for better skill, nor nourish with such distant luxuries as would bring strength to the blood." It is poverty, often, that must needs slay the little child. And if that child had the same blessings of God's providence which have been rained on others, might it not go on to an honorable manhood, and to a brighter future ? Alas, for those who are shut up in their poverty ; who are straightened in their circumstance ; who are strangers in a strange land ; who are hedged in on every side ! Here is an opportunity for waiting upon God.

Waiting upon God now means, for you, waiting in the midst of your upholstered abundance. Such waiting is not a very signal virtue ; but when the loaf fails, when the scuttle is empty, when the night brings but shivering, then, having done all that in you lies, to have such confidence in God's fatherly love, in spite of ap-

pearances, to have such a belief in the other life in spite of seeming contradictions, as to be able to rise above suffering—that is true waiting upon God.

Blessed are they who have learned this lesson out of their physical trials and necessities, so that they are able, when all other aid fails, at least to feel that God is their strength, and will be their salvation. Saith the Master to you, "Are ye not better than many sparrows? Why take ye thought for food and raiment? God takes care of you."

There is the charter of faith. God says he remembers you, and will succor you; and if the relief is delayed, we are not to despond.

"Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"

There are a great many (such is the strange play which is going on in life, not upon exhibition) who, this day, are suffering cares and anxieties which are natural, but not necessary, considered from a higher point of view, in their changed conditions of life. There are a great many who say, piteously, and too often into ears of stone, "I have not always been what I am. I have walked in a higher sphere." It is a natural sympathy which we experience when we see those who have been inured to refinement, yea to luxury, thrown down to the bottom by the revolution of the great wheel of events. But it marks and condemns the system of education which one has been under, when it leads that one to weakness and helplessness. When you show me a man who has been cultured, you ought to show me a man that is better built to meet the contingencies of life than any that are uncultured.

During the war we sent into the camp both classes; and we expected the rude swain, who had known only coarseness, would make a better soldier, and resist all the hardships of the field more easily than the young man who had passed through college, or who had been brought up in the midst of wealth and refinement; but experience did not justify that expectation. It was found, on the contrary, that although the regiments that were gathered from the country were physically hardier than those that came from the cities, they, after all, could not endure the service as well. It was found that those who came from the cities, and had more mind, more brain-power, and had been brought up in wealth and with culture, were more efficient than the opposite class. It was found that educated intelligence was a better preservative than mere muscular strength, and that those who had been brought up in dainty conditions of life, adapted themselves more easily to the hardships of the camp than those who came from the poorer ranks of society.

It was found that men who had mental resources could bear up under wounds, and would recover, where those who were without such resources were more apt to sicken and die. It is the result of education to make men more enduring, not simply in the midst of favorable circumstances, but everywhere.

It is said that when the French nobility were expelled from France, after the French Revolution, they bore their exile and wanderings more nobly, and were more self-helpful, than the common peasantry, or than men in the lower ranks of life who were also expelled. And when the Hungarian expulsion brought Kosuth and his noble band to this country, no equal number of men ever justified culture more, by adapting themselves to their circumstances, and without complaint or repining meeting the hardships of their changed methods of livelihood. A true education makes a man larger and better, and fits him for revolutions. If one has lived in refinement, and in a changed condition goes down to the bottom, and comes in contact with barrenness and coarseness, that culture which he has acquired sustains him, and makes him superior to his condition. The inwardness of a man should be ample in proportion as his outwardness is meagre. A man should hold himself adequate to any place or function, and he should understand that God has a providence for every circumstance, and that he never puts a burden on shoulders that have not strength to bear it. Let not persons therefore who have been in better circumstances in life; let not children whose fathers and mothers could do much for them while they were living, but who are now fatherless and motherless, the property being scattered, and some of them having been sent out to service, some of them from necessity having resorted to teaching, and some of them being dependant upon relatives—let not such persons go all their life moaning, and complaining of the hardness of God's dealings with them. Let them rather wait upon God, and rise up to a higher insight of his administration, and endeavor to adapt themselves to it, and to reap its benefits.

Did you ever stand by the side of a tree in summer from whose side was issuing some sugary matter, and see ants running up and down, those coming down being filled, and those going up being empty? Just exactly so it is in society. There are two currents, one going up and the other coming down, those that are coming down having been up and got their fill of sugar, as it were, and others going up empty.

If there are any in life who have a right to show ill-nature and despondency, it certainly is those who are the victims of a change of circumstances. But even if your circumstances are changed for the

worse, that is no reason why you should be discouraged, or become soured in your disposition. Even the corn should teach you. For when the corn is rudely shelled from the cob by the swine's mouth, and trampled into the mire, it does not complain. It sprouts and grows again. So it triumphs. And if you have met with a change of circumstances, do not stand repining at your lot, but wait upon God, in the hope that you will recover whatever you have lost that it is desirable for you to have. Remember this :

“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.”

There are, also, those who are brought to a great train of emergencies, to perplexities in their affairs, which involve their whole power, and the very comfort of their household. There are those who seem driving down the cataract, and who, though they make every exertion, seem not to be able to change their course, nor to hold back. We come into such passages, every one of us, first or last. We pass through emergencies where our present prosperity seems to have been undermined, or to have passed away. A man's wealth is like the snow-houses which we boys built in the olden time on high drifts. No sooner had the sun come forth than our houses melted, and the foundations slipped from under them. Our possessions are built on foundations as treacherous as those. Men seek prosperity in this life; and when they have attained it, how many of them have plowed furrows of care in their brow! What sleepless nights, what restless days, what sorrows, what sufferings do they go through to acquire it! A man's money, or power, oftentimes is not worth what it costs of toil and anguish.

Here is the time for those who have a true faith in God to rest in him; to put all their affairs into his hand. Surely you will exert yourself, and do the best you can; but every man sooner or later comes to a point at which exertion can go no further; and that is the time to cast anchor, and to say, “I wait for thee, O God of my salvation.”

A friend of mine came on to the coast, some twenty-five or thirty years ago; and there was but a distance of twenty-four hours between him and New York; and there he lay, beating off and on, off and on, unable to make any headway. One day everything seemed to threaten instant destruction; and the captain, when he had done everything that his knowledge or skill could devise, lit his cigar, and stood upon the quarter-deck, wrapping himself in his raiment, and leaning very quietly against the rail. My friend said to him, “Do you think the peril is great?” “Imminent, instant,” said he. “Why, then, are you so quiet?” “I have done everything that I can do, and what is

the use of attempting to do more?" He rested; and it was not an unintelligent nor indolent rest; it was a rest founded on the consciousness that he had gone to the measure of his power.

There is a sphere in domestic experience for this waiting upon God—this trusting in the Lord. What other hours in life are like those which we have with our children? The first faint flush on the child's face; its increased sensibility; its pettishness; its crying with pain; its subsidence and passivity in the mother's lap; the calling of the physician; the anxious repeated visits; the days and the nights of watching; the child still sinking; the calling in of other physicians; the doing of all that love can do; and still the child steadily sinking; the life leaking out; everything that can be done to save the child having been done, and yet the disease raging on—that is the experience of not a few. There comes a time when there is nothing more that can be done. There comes a time when all thought of enterprise, of skill, of knowledge, is ended. And at that point, if one but knew it, there is a beam of light thrown down upon every true Christian heart, through which he may rise to God and feel that both he and the child may be left in the arms of a living Saviour. He that laid his hand upon children's heads, and took them up in his arms and blessed them with caresses, is not indifferent when any little child lies sick in our lap or in the nursery; and if our children linger, and we know not whether they are going to die or live, instead of giving way to tormenting fears, and becoming every day more and more burdened with anxiety, we should have faith, trust, quiet. We should *wait upon God*.

Perhaps it is your friend far away that is sick. Then comes the grinding anguish of uncertainty. Uncertainties are the torment of the world. Oscillation between hope and fear, especially in those who are imaginative, creates an intensity of dread by embellishing every side of possible mischief. Real troubles may strike us down, but oscillation and uncertainty torment us without striking us down.

Many a mother, on the morning after some reported great battle dreaded to read the account, but, drawn by the fascination, read, and read, and at last discovered that her boy was among the wounded. She was far from him. She did not even know to what hospital they had carried him. She had no messenger to tell her from day to day whether he throve or sank. Alone, up under the edge of the mountain, without resources, a mother's heart wove sad fancies. Tell me about people's suffering wounds! it was the wounded in heart that suffered in that great conflict. It was the buried grief, the unspoken suffering, the silent tear, that God beheld.

And yet, wherefore? Was not the child under the same providence which nourished the mother? and were not the promises of God to her enough for such an hour as this? Could she not give up that child to God, and say, "To Him who made and controls the earth, to Him in whose hand are all the elements of the world, I give my boy, and I will wait on God"?

Or, worse than that, where the sickness and the wound are not of the body, where they are of the soul, and where the child is out-cast and vagabond, and wanders up and down the world, no one knows where—the child of many prayers, the child of much instruction, and the child whom is dearer, perhaps, than any other, because the parent loves most that child which needs parental love most—where such are the circumstances, there is opportunity for waiting upon God. What are the terrible experiences of many parents who never hear the wind blowing around about their houses that they do not say, "O God, where is my child?" who never see the balmy and serene perfectness of the Sabbath morning breaking over the hills, that it does not bring to them the thought, "Where is my child? Is he dead? Is he encompassed and whirled round by evil men in temptation and wickedness? O God, where is my child?" This is a bereavement which is worse than death. This is a trial which only they can understand who have had the experience of it. And yet, even here is there not a faith that can trust in God? May not He who gave us the parable of the prodigal son, and showed in that matchless scene by the feelings of the father what are God's feelings toward the wandering—may not He receive this trust? May not we find rest in the Lord?

Do you say, "This is easy for the fortunate, but impossible for those who are actual sufferers"? I do not say that we can assume these graces and virtues in their full potency all at once: I say that these are stages of Christian manhood which are to be passed through like the stages of every other form of higher culture. But I say, also, that every man who suffers should learn, in his suffering, to lean on the Lord, and rest in quiet. This is possible, though perhaps it cannot be attained to-day nor to-morrow.

A fair-weather trust is of very little use. It is better than nothing, but that is all. A religion which cheers you in prosperity is certainly better than no religion; and faith in God while the sky is blue is better than no faith; but, after all, taking men as they are, the religion which they need is a religion which is brought into play more in the day of trial than in the day of prosperity. What matters it what is the texture of your raiment in August? It

is *January* that needs thick raiment. What matters it what your experiences are in prosperity? It is *adversity* that is to test the nature of your experiences. An anchor is not bad when it lies upon the deck; it is convenient when we use it in a tranquil harbor; but when the stars are hidden, and the storm is on the deep, and you are driving in upon the coast—then it is *salvation*. We need a hope, a faith, which, while it will be a convenience in fair weather, will be our mainstay on foul and stormy days. How many Christians there are who have a hope which lasts only until they need to use it! How many persons there are who are able to sustain sorrow until sorrow comes upon them! How many there are who trust in God until they have occasion to trust in him!

Do you recollect the scene in Don Quixote in which the immortal knight put upon himself a helmet made of pasteboard? That helmet being smitten and pierced by a sword, he sewed it up again, and would not part with it, but in his insanity wore it, and felt that he had an all-sufficient helmet on his head. Are there not many Don Quixotes among men, who put on armor that looks very well till some sword or spear is thrust into it, but which then is found to be like the pasteboard helmet that went to pieces the moment it was touched? If we are to have a piety that shall sustain us in the flood and in the fire; if we are to have a faith that shall be an all-sufficient armor by day and by night, the year round, and from year to year, we must have one that is made up of something better than mere pasteboard instruction or a paper belief.

In our personal religious experience there is a development of this true spiritual life required. There is a necessity, in many cases, of men's falling back upon this same trust in God and waiting upon him. We are commanded to *work out our own salvation*, as if we were quarrying stone to build a house withal; as if we were hewing out timber in the woods with which to build a ship for a voyage. We are perpetually brought into circumstances where we long for Christian excellence. We long to be able to govern our tempers; to deepen our disinterested kindness; to restrain the animal instincts which are so strong in us; to correct the stinginess or selfishness that makes us like bark-bound trees; and we strive to do these things; yet in hours of unwatchfulness, in a moment, the labor of months is apparently scattered.

Under such circumstances men grow discouraged. They feel that it is scarcely worth their while to attempt to hew into form a thing so ungainly as their disposition, or to bring into subjection so wild and headstrong a thing as their passions. They make

so little progress in these directions, that to change constitutional tendencies seems to them absolutely impossible. Yet, when men have done all they can, with vigilance, with discretion, and with patience, it is for them also to rest in God.

Is God patient and helpful toward us when it is our outward circumstances, our bodily needs? and shall he not be much more so when it is our inward and spiritual needs? Because sin is odious in the sight of men, we are apt to think it is odious in the sight of God in the same way. Men's thoughts of each other's sinfulness is oftentimes mingled with revengeful feelings. But God's thought of our sinfulness is like a mother's thought of the sinfulness of her dear beloved child. She hates the sin, but loves the child, and gives herself for the child, that she may cleanse out the sin. When God sees in us the sin of pride, or the sin of selfishness, running strong and deep, he does not despise us. He looks upon that which is evil in us as we look upon the warts on the rugged oak. He looks upon it as a development which comes from supereminent temptations or constitutional weaknesses, and so has compassion upon us.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

There is no other being that pities transgression so much as that God who punishes transgression, and who has fixed in natural law a penalty for it, and who "will by no means clear the guilty,"—but who has compassion upon those who are out of the way, and gives himself that he may heal them of their wrong-doings, and recover them from their backslidings. God's heart is out toward all those who are full of faults, who are full of sins, yea and, I think, who are full of crimes. Over every jail there is a tenderer Spirit brooding than ever passes in or out through the door. Send to the hospital where vice has taken final refuge the kindest nurse you can, send the largest-hearted philanthropist you can, send what you please, there is still in the air above, silently brooding over the miscreants whose last hours of shame and sorrow are ending, a sweet and tender Spirit that outshines all that the human heart can do or feel or know.

He who gave himself for men never forgets them. The poorest, the wickedest, the most desperate, are still under his eye, and are cared for by him. God pities those who are weighed down with their crimes, and those who are struck through with vices or transgressions. They may, if they but know their privilege, look up, and wait upon God, even in the last moment, pleading that he will care for them.

I need not press this subject further, my brethren. Who of us

is there that has not had occasion, or that has not occasion now, or that may not ere long have occasion, to rely upon God, and trust in Him, rather than upon himself? Who can foresee what a day shall bring forth? Who can tell what plunges he may make before a month has passed? Who can tell what revolutions may take place in his affairs? Who can assure you that your household shall be unscattered? Who can assure you that you shall be shielded from the storm that founders many and many a brave ship on the sea of life? We have no guarantee. God's providence is over us all, and watching us all; but the secrets of that providence are unrevealed. One thing is made known to us, however—namely, that God is our Father, that he maintains a government of love, and that it is our privilege to look up in every emergency, and say, "Thou, God, seest me. Thou, God, lovest me. I cast my care upon thee. I put my burdens on the Lord. I will rest in God, and wait patiently for him."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Our gracious God, we thank thee that thou art from year to year making it easy and easier for us to approach thee. The way of prayer is familiar. By trouble we have been driven as by strong winds to thee, the Harbor of rest. We have been drawn to thee even as the summer draws us forth to all its bounty. Thou hast manifested thyself to us in thy wisdom and goodness; and our hearts have been cheered in the thought of thine administration. We are glad that it is not selfishness nor caprice that rules; that wisdom sheathed in goodness is forever bearing sway; that power is in thy hand an instrument of all good; and that thou art governing through the ages for good to those who belong to thee. We rejoice that this is the genius of thine administration, and that this shall forever and forever be the glory of thy name, and the gladness of thy people. Though thou dost work mysteriously; though we cannot follow all thy footsteps, nor know all thy methods, we know enough to draw our hearts toward thee in gladness and in trust. And we desire to learn the lesson of resting in thee for knowledge of all that is now obscure, the beginnings of which we discern, but the ends of which we cannot disentangle. We desire to rest in thee with the certainty that at last justice will be made apparent in things seemingly devoid of goodness, and that thou wilt make thine administration appear high over all, exceeding glorious, and forever admirable. We beseech of thee that we may walk in this comfortable faith, and that in our daily affairs we may have such confidence in thee that thy presence shall be to us as a shadow in a weary land, and a stay and a staff under burdens and troubles. May we rest in God, and find there the comfort of this perfect faith.

We pray that thou wilt grant that those in thy presence, this morning, who have drawn near to thee for help, may be entertained as out of royal abundance. Grant that those who are discouraged may find cordial in thy love. May there rise up in their souls such thoughts of God's provident care over the lowest and most degraded as shall cheer and comfort them while they are fulfilling the remaining duties of life. May those who are in poverty, and are striving against its evils, have often before them the eternal riches which they shall inherit—that rest which remaineth for the people of God, in the Father's house, from which none shall be exiled who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt draw near to any who are in affliction. May they know that though thou hast concealed thyself behind the darkness that broods over them, within it is the warmth and flame of love. Say to them that thou dost not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. And may they be patient beneath their trials.

Wilt thou hear the prayers of those who plead for themselves, or for those who are dearer to them than themselves. May they never give over. May they pray and not faint.

We pray that thou wilt grant to all those who stand in the perplexities of daily life, in the household, or in the world's affairs, that strength of God which shall enable them to discern continually the way of duty, and by which they shall be able to walk erect therein.

We pray that thou wilt take away from those who are perplexed with cares, the sting of care. And may those upon whom thou hast laid weighty affairs of this world not be thoughtless of the greater interests which lie in the world beyond. And to those whom thou hast entrusted with power wilt thou grant deliverance from those temptations which betide the possession of power. May they have present with them evermore the vision of life and of death, and of the life to come. And may they have that

golden reed of the sanctuary put into their hands by which to measure with a heavenly estimate all the things which they hold on earth.

May the young in our midst grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Bless the parents who attempt to teach their children the things which are honorable, and just, and pure, and true, and manly.

We pray for all that are in our schools as learners. Bless, also, those who are instructors in them. Crown the labor of thy servants, we beseech of thee, with the richest blessing of God. As in the past, so in time to come, wilt thou abide with them. May grace, mercy, and peace, be multiplied to them.

We pray, O Lord, that to-day thou wilt raise up friends for the friendless. In this inclement season, when there is so much suffering, may there be those who shall seek for the needy. May those who, having means, succor those who are in want, become rich by that which they give away of their treasure.

We pray that thou wilt bless all the churches of this city, and of the great city near us. Unite thy servants more and more. May they, by the things in which they differ, no longer angrily vex each other. May they rather be drawn together by the things in which they agree. May the peace of God rest upon them, and may the power of God overshadow them.

May all the churches be upheld by thy hand. May the Gospel be given to thy people in the wilderness. And grant that the truth as it is in Jesus may be preached in the uttermost parts of the earth.

Bless those, to-day, who are sitting in the midst of darkness in heathen lands. Be with those who are preaching Christ to the ignorant everywhere. May they labor, and may they behold the seed they sow springing up speedily; or, if it is not in accordance with thy will that they should see it springing up, may they not be discouraged, but labor manfully to the end, knowing that great will be their reward in heaven.

We pray that truth may prevail in our own land; that intelligence may drive ignorance away; that the weak may become strong; that the strong may be humane; and that all things may honor thee. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, may thy name be blessed in all the earth.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praise evermore.
Amen.

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
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
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